

Committee of the Whole
Monday September 9, 2019
DELEGATION NOTES: Construction Management Policy

- Introduce self (Chair. Members of Committee)
- Here on behalf of the BDBA and its 430 small business members to speak to Capital Works Department's report aiming to establish new guidelines for the approval and management of new construction projects
- My Association is aware that this report and its recommendations will have City-wide implications
- I am here to share feedback and comments from the Downtown business community to inform this report about the "*special conditions*" related to construction in our dense commercial district in Downtown Burlington
- My goal is to share with Committee some recommendations specific to the downtown in hopes that they will translate into policy
- Our comments have been informed by members of the Board and the Association's Guiding Principles, from the small business community in the core, from Downtown patrons, and, feedback that has been echoed in forums like the Ward 2 Councillor's recent pre-construction meetings with the general public

- My recommendations to Committee will focus on the key areas of: PARKING, COMMUNICATIONS and TIMELINES
-

BDBA's Work Plan is underscored by the Principle that our Downtown must be "a year-round attraction that is walkable, inviting, safe, accessible and clean"

A well articulated construction management plan can help us nurture this principle!

Our membership is fully aware that we must co-exist with a campaign of construction and land development in close proximity to our businesses.

As we brace ourselves for a period of unprecedented development in the Core the business community is justifiably concerned about how to maintain a high level of operation and service to the public through a protracted period of demolition, excavation and construction.

The questions that are being raised need redress through this construction management plan: Questions like.....

- ***Will access to my business by patrons, staff and suppliers be impaired?***
- ***Can the noise, dust and debris associated with construction be contained?***
- ***How can my business be informed EVERY step of the way about the construction schedule to manage my customers' expectations?***
- ***Will the breadth and multiplicity of construction projects throughout the core result in "potential" patrons choosing another shopping district due to the perceived hassle?***

Today I would like to table 4 recommendations for Committee's consideration which the BDBA believes can help to address the key concerns generated by my membership:

1) PARKING

On page 3 of the report, under *Financial Matters*, the notion that “*cost recovery for lost revenue due to the loss of City administered parking spaces may consider compensation to local businesses related to the Downtown Parking Levy*”

My read of this is that developers that occupy on-street or long-term parking spaces Downtown, essentially removing them from the pooled parking inventory, shall pay market rate for these spaces through compensation to the Defined Parking Levy fund.

If my read is correct, I submit that this **in no way directly provides compensation to the local businesses.**

Our membership contributes over \$300,000/year to the Defined Parking Area though a levy with the knowledge that this Fund is dedicated to the maintenance of our current parking assets and as a capital fund to deliver future public parking supply.

I submit that true compensation to the local business community by way of parking can be accomplished by NOT allocating public parking spaces in the Defined Parking Area to the construction team!

Each space removed from the public parking inventory to support a construction vehicle is a space which can no longer be utilized by a customer. The opportunity cost is too great!

Recommendation 1: That the Municipality direct, not recommend, that construction workers' personal vehicles park in spaces outside of the Defined Parking Area and that workers be shuttled to the construction site or staging area.

Consequently, where this is not achievable, that each space rented within the Defined Parking Area be subject to a significant premium, beyond market rate.

2) NOISE & CLEANLINESS

It goes without saying that noise, dust and airborne debris is a natural consequence of any construction project.

And the business community appreciates that reasonable measures will be in action to minimize these conditions during a protracted construction schedule. I think it is also reasonable to suggest that the aggregate effect on the immediate environment will be complicated by several construction projects taking place at one time.

In an effort to ensure the principle that our Downtown continue as an "inviting" location to shop, dine and stroll....and continue to deliver as a hub for Civic pride which is punctuated by a year round campaign of public animation....I'd like to table 2 recommendations:

Recommendation 2 (a): THAT the development community purchase and execute a service which removes settled debris from the ground floor entrances of neighbouring business, including window washing, within a one-block radius of the construction after each significant "dust" event

Recommendation 2 (b): THAT active on-site construction be directed to stand down for the duration of significant public events and animations Downtown, as defined by the City's Parks & Recreation Department.

3) COMMUNICATIONS:

Successful entrepreneurs are those people who have learned to adapt to the changing environment around their business. They do this based on detailed and timely intelligence. With this critical knowledge they can adapt their business model to meet potential challenges and more effectively manage their customers' expectations as they experience their business.

The Report lists two actions related to "Public Communication" which I believe should be refined.

Page 9 indicates that "*A preconstruction written notice shall be sent to all adjacent properties along the construction access routes, Emergency agencies as well as any impacted bus authorities*". The Report goes on to cite "*informing the Ward Councillor, business community and residents*" as a communications goal.

These are both well-intended provisions but I submit to Committee that they are but a first step toward a more ambitious communications campaign.

I'd like to submit two supplementary recommendations to refine the communications initiatives in a way which is more meaningful to the lives of busy entrepreneurs:

Recommendation 3 (a): THAT pre-construction written notices be delivered to ALL members within the BIA and that the BDBA be identified as a key partner in the delivery of an electronic version of same.

Recommendation 3 (b): THAT the City's Communications Department build and update a public-facing, online development dashboard for each construction project with real time, weekly updates.

And finally, I'd like to put an exclamation point on the fact that the concerns voiced about the overall effect of a protracted construction campaign acting as a disincentive to new and existing Downtown patrons are real!

The chief worry amongst the business community is how to stay vital and maintain Downtown's appeal during a period of significant disruption.

This is, in my estimation, the hardest variable to calculate and potentially the most damaging to the greatest number of businesses in the Core.

As a starting point toward greater awareness I submit one final recommendation:

Recommendation 4: THAT dedicated funding be secured to support a multi-media branding campaign dedicated to the messaging that "Downtown is open for business during construction".

Chair, members of the Committee, you can count on the BDBA to be a partner in the delivery of this campaign which can include marketing assets such as bus shelters, construction hoarding and messaging at high profile locations at the entrances to the Downtown business community.

In my view, we need to be ever vigilant in our expectations for how this revised Construction & Mobility Management Plan will be delivered and monitored in the specific case of Ward 2/Downtown.

Construction is at our doorstep and the Downtown business community is expecting optimum results through the refinement of this Policy.